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ABSTRACT

Noting that research demonstrates that high quality early childhood education (ECE) has long-term benefits for children, this review outlines definitions of quality early childhood education within the context of New Zealand. The focus is mainly on two specific aspects of quality: staff qualifications and indicators of quality. The review notes that there has been a long-held vision that, in New Zealand, ECE will be provided by well-qualified staff. Further, it is widely recognized by professionals and within the regulatory and advisory services provided by the government that training and qualifications are key components of ECE quality. The review affirms the importance of qualifications for high quality ECE services and for children's learning and development. The contribution of evaluation and accreditations systems is also evident, but weaker. Research findings indicate that regulating levels of staff qualifications, and having staff who hold coherent qualifications, enhances the quality of ECE teaching practice. There is also evidence that the effectiveness of professional development is influenced by staff qualifications and by the number of qualified staff in the early childhood service or center. The review notes that teaching practice and responsive interactions within early childhood settings influence child outcomes. An emerging theme relates to the role of reflective early childhood practitioners who are attuned to children's perspectives. The review summarizes the current situation regarding qualification requirements and outlines work toward coordinating recent initiatives on practitioner self-evaluation. Two appendices delineate current requirements for ECE in New Zealand and illustrate links between evaluation projects in New Zealand. (Contains 103 references.) (KB)

ASPECTS OF QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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ASPECTS OF QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Valerie N. Podmore and Anne Meade

With Anne Kerslake Hendricks



NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

WELLINGTON
2000

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LIST OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	5
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	7
BACKGROUND	9
Benefits of Quality Early Childhood Education	9
Definitions of High Quality Early Childhood Education	10
NZCER Research	13
NZCER—Institute for Early Childhood Studies, and University of Waikato (joint research)	14
Scope of this Review	15
STAFF QUALIFICATIONS	16
International Research	16
Teacher Qualifications and Teacher Turnover	24
Influence of Lower Education and/or Qualifications Levels on Early Education	25
Research on Family Daycare/Home-Based Care	27
Culture-Specific Early Childhood Services	28
New Zealand Research	28
Summary	33
QUALITY EVALUATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES	34
Introduction	34
Formative evaluation	34
Programme evaluation and programme accreditation	34
Selecting a programme evaluation instrument	35
The accreditation/evaluation cycle	37
Research evaluations of the QIAS and NAEYC accreditation systems	39
SYNTHESIS AND SUMMARY	42
REFERENCES	43
APPENDIX A—QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS IN THE REGULATIONS	50
APPENDIX B—LINKS BETWEEN EVALUATION PROJECTS	55
OTHER TITLES	56

ABSTRACT

Overseas and New Zealand research demonstrates clearly that high quality early childhood education has long-term benefits for children. In New Zealand, *Education to Be More* categorised the benefits of early childhood education as being for children, for parents/whanau, and for society.

This review outlines definitions of quality early childhood education within the context of New Zealand. A description and appraisal of international and New Zealand literature follows. The focus is mainly on two specific aspects of quality in early childhood education: staff qualifications, and indicators of quality.

There has been a long-held vision that in New Zealand early childhood education will be provided by well-qualified staff. This has developed in part because of research evidence. There is wide recognition, by professionals and within the regulatory and advisory services provided by Government, that training and qualifications are key components of quality in early childhood services.

The review affirms the importance of qualifications for high quality early childhood services and for children's learning and development. The contribution of evaluation and accreditation systems is also evident, but weaker.

Findings overseas and in New Zealand indicate that regulating levels of qualifications of staff, and having staff who hold coherent qualifications, enhances the quality of early childhood teaching practice. There is also evidence in the New Zealand and overseas research literature that the effectiveness of professional development is influenced by staff qualifications and by the number of qualified staff in the early childhood centre or service.

Teaching practice and responsive interactions within early childhood settings in turn influence outcomes for children. An emerging theme in this review, linked to qualifications and continuing professional development, relates to the role of reflective early childhood practitioners who are attuned to children's perspectives.

The current situation regarding qualification requirements is summarised. Work towards co-ordinating recent initiatives on practitioner self-evaluation is also outlined. In New Zealand, changes to qualification requirements are currently being implemented, and there are additional policy initiatives related to quality practice.

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The authors acknowledge input from Rachel Brown, who drafted preliminary sections of the review of the early literature on qualifications in early childhood education. We are also grateful to Roberta Tiatia for her contributions to word processing the final document.

Val Podmore, Anne Meade, and Anne Kerslake Hendricks
July 2000

BACKGROUND

Benefits of Quality Early Childhood Education

Overseas and New Zealand research demonstrates clearly that high quality early childhood education has long-term benefits for children. In a review of research on the outcomes of early childhood education, Podmore (1993) concludes:

International research demonstrates that high quality care is centrally important if infants are to benefit from the experience of centre-based care during the first year of life. Age-related research findings suggest that poor quality early childhood care and education may have negative outcomes, whereas high quality care enhances infants' social and cognitive development. Research from the U.S. and Britain shows that, for 3- and 4-year-old children, attending early childhood care and education centres that have more highly trained staff and quality staff-child ratios has ongoing benefits. (p. 28)

Education to Be More categorised the benefits of early childhood education as being for children, for parents/whanau, and for society. The benefits for children are short-term and long-term, encompassing all facets of development, and all intelligences.

The Education Review Office, in its early childhood series with titles starting *What counts as quality in...*, quotes the Government report *Early Childhood Care and Education Funding Review* (1991) itemising the "public benefits" of early childhood education as: educational, labour market, welfare, and language and cultural benefits.

Further, the Education Review Office (1997) specifies in *What counts as quality in kohanga reo*, the kaupapa (philosophy) that the whanau have a clear understanding of the philosophy; that the kaupapa underpins the operations of management, staff, and the whanau; the kohanga reo is kaupapa driven rather than funding driven; there is a strong commitment to self determination and Te Ao Maori; and the learning needs of the children are at the forefront.

Two longitudinal studies in Sweden have demonstrated clearly that children benefit from high quality early childhood education (Andersson, 1992, 1994; Broberg, Hwang, Wessels, & Lamb, 1994). Andersson's research team tracked 128 children who started attending daycare centres at an early age (Andersson, 1989, 1992, 1994, 1998). Compared with children who commenced daycare at an older age, and with children who were cared for in their own homes, children who started centre-based or family daycare before the age of 1 year tended to perform better in school and to be rated more highly by their teachers on their social and emotional behaviour at age 8 years and again at age 13 years and 16

years. The second study tracked 146 children from the second year of life, and demonstrated that by age 8 years, children who had spent longer in daycare showed higher verbal ability than their peers (Broberg, Hwang, Wessels, and Lamb, 1994). Andersson (1994) attributes the positive findings of these studies to the high quality of care and education provided in daycare centres in Sweden, and to policies of the 1980s which promoted universal access to childcare. There has been some concern about the standard of structural quality becoming more variable across Swedish daycare centres during the 1990s, although the overall standards remain very high compared with those in other countries including the United States (Andersson, 1994). Consistently high standards have been maintained for training and qualifications.

This research review will not concentrate further on Sweden where there is overall high quality and all teaching staff are trained and qualified. Our focus is on countries where there are wider variations in qualifications, regulatory requirements, and quality, and it is possible to demonstrate links between various levels of qualifications and the quality of early education provided.

Definitions of High Quality Early Childhood Education

Several international research reviews define the main structural components of high quality early childhood education. These include, for example:

Child-centred, planned educational programmes; high staff-child ratios; trained staff and ongoing in-service training and support; stability of staff and children; small group sizes; mixed age grouping, provided that the centres have quality staff-child ratios and the adults are committed to age-integration; active, democratic parental participation; and language maintenance and cultural revival. (Podmore, 1993, p.28)

Smith (1996a), at a conference on quality in childcare centres, listed 9 research-based criteria for quality in early childhood services:

- sensitive and responsive interactions between adults and children
- adult-child ratios
- group size
- staff training and education
- staff stability
- curriculum and program focus
- peer group harmony
- communication with parents
- favourable staff wages and working conditions
- safe and healthy physical environments.

In her conclusion, Smith discusses the role of research in defining quality. Definitions of quality do not emerge from research alone, although research findings have an important role to play. Quality is a matter of collective values, which must be negotiated by consideration of the value perspectives of the various stakeholders, and the perspective of the child is one of the most important.

In a literature review relating to quality evaluation of early childhood programmes, Cubey and Dalli (1996) stress the importance of early childhood staff being involved in evaluating their own programmes, to ensure that inappropriate evaluation methods are not externally imposed. They note that in order to build competence and confidence in teachers' abilities to self-evaluate, training and support need to be provided. One important theme in their review is that evaluation is closely connected to providing a high quality early childhood service.

Farquhar (1990) "reviews the problem of defining and assessing the nature of quality early education and care", taking into account the New Zealand context. Topics discussed include methodological challenges, with specific attention being drawn to the problems of evaluating philosophically and culturally diverse programmes. This is pertinent given the differences existing among early childhood services in this country—a diversity which is encouraged in order to meet the needs of different communities. Farquhar cites research suggesting that quality can be evaluated using methods that are sensitive to particular philosophies, as well as to regional, ethnic and community needs (e.g., Goodnow, 1989; Lero and Kyle, 1985.) She also points out that any potential limitations of quality measures must be acknowledged, given that interpretations of quality are influenced by different perspectives.

Farquhar's doctoral thesis (1993) addresses the issue of quality in early childhood programmes in greater detail. Her findings confirm other research in identifying a range of values and perspectives on quality early childhood services. She found different constructions of quality in kindergarten, childcare centre, playcentre, and kohanga reo groups. She notes that "the practices and philosophies of the early childhood groups appeared to be linked to differences in parent and staff views about quality" (ibid., p.iii).

The *Report of the Quality Funding Working Group* (1995) on the eligibility criteria for quality funding stresses that "quality" comes from a mix of interrelated variables. Thus, financial incentives based on only two input factors are unlikely to result in improved quality outputs. Summaries of discussions and submissions relating to quality indicators and related funding are covered in detail in the report and are not repeated here. However, we do note its recommendation that when considering funding levels, particular attention must be paid to the needs of early

childhood services in rural or isolated areas, and low socio-economic areas, and of nga kohanga reo, Pacific Island language nests, and unlicensed centres. This type of concern leads us to comment that some additional policy and provision are needed to lift the quality levels of those services that can only be described as adequate, due to reasons largely outside their control.

The Ministry of Education's (1998) document, *Quality In Action: Te Mahi Whai Hua. Implementing the Revised Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices in New Zealand Early Childhood Services*, has a wealth of information for early childhood services.

The Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPs) are founded on two guiding principles, requiring services to:

- *Work in partnership with parents/whanau* to promote and extend the learning and development of each child who attends or receives the service through the provision of quality early childhood education and care;
- *Develop and implement a curriculum* that assists all children to be competent and confident learners and communicators healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.

There are three main divisions within DOPs, relating to:

Learning and development;

Communication and consultation; and

Operation and administration.

Either or both of the descriptions under each Desirable Objective and Practice, and the "signposts" provided throughout the document, could be examples of how a service is meeting the requirements of the related DOP. Some descriptions have the potential to be incorporated into quality measures (e.g., "Educators use and support children's home language and communication styles"). Their relevance to New Zealand early childhood services would be difficult to dispute. Some are not likely to be found in overseas literature; for example, desirable approaches to the inclusion of bicultural practices (such as the emphasis on understanding Māori concepts of health and well-being, and showing respect for Māori protocol in learning experiences and service practices).

Hurst's study (1995) examines accountability procedures for monitoring quality in New Zealand early childhood centres. Education Review Office (ERO) procedures were found to focus on compliance with government regulations (structural variables), rather than process variables (which research literature considers to be more central components of quality). Although early childhood services staff and parents

were supportive of the Education Review Office's approach, they identified a need for more process-oriented evaluation methods to facilitate quality improvement.

Smith (1996) investigated quality at 100 different childcare centres catering for children aged under two years, in cities and provincial towns. Researchers visited each centre for two days, and used two instruments. The Abbott-Shim Assessment Profile (Infant version) was completed, with minor modifications to some items in order for the scale to be suitable for use in New Zealand. Additionally, the Melhuish/Howes Observational Schedule allowed for the study of interactions and responses between staff and children. Among other findings, Smith's key conclusion was that the working conditions, wages, and previous education of staff were of crucial importance in providing high quality environments for infants.

Smith and Taylor (1995) have also edited the proceedings of a national seminar where participants considered how policy and practice could be used most effectively to support the improvement of quality in New Zealand early childhood centres. Issues addressed in the papers include potential frameworks for quality early childhood education (from both Māori and Pakeha perspectives), the realities of defining and improving quality, and the cost of quality.

NZCER Research

Competent Children Longitudinal Project (Wylie, Hendricks and Thompson, 1996, 1998, 1999).

The Competent Children research team developed an ECS quality rating scale (drawn from the literature and other rating scales) to evaluate the quality of ECS in the project they carried out in the wider Wellington region. The rating scale has four components: Staff:child Interactions; Self-esteem; Programme Focus; and Physical Environment and Safety. In addition, some of the process variables in the child observation schedule have a quality focus. They are: joint engagement in verbal problem-solving/knowledge seeking, and in problem-solving in play; and adult involvement with children. The team found that quality education, using this sort of measure, is associated with children's levels of competency.

Wylie et al. (1999) report further that high ratings on certain aspects of quality in early childhood education are related to children's reading at age 8 years. These aspects of quality are:

"a print saturated environment, staff who are responsive to children, high levels of staff-child interaction, staff who model and guide children through ECE activities, staff who join children in their play" (pp. 171-172).

Early childhood quality, in terms of having staff who are responsive to children and participate in their play, is also associated positively with children's mathematics scores at age 8.

**NZCER—Institute for Early Childhood Studies,
and University of Waikato (joint research)**

Evaluation of Early Childhood Programmes Using Te Whāriki

Podmore and May, with Mara (1998) report on their ethnographic research, addressing the key elements of programme quality in relation to the strands and goals of *Te Whāriki*. They discuss how the analysis of their data is leading to a possible framework for self-evaluation by centres, through the development of "Learning and Teaching Stories" as a focus for reflection and appraisal, leading to action. A child's voice provides "the initial questions centres need to ask themselves as they begin their journey towards evaluation" (p. v). For example, "How do you engage my mind, offer challenges, and extend my world?" (Exploration Strand for *Te Whāriki*). The implication is that where the child's questions can be answered affirmatively, better quality early childhood education is in evidence. The authors outline connections to the theoretical concepts of guided participation and scaffolding, based on the perspectives of Bruner and Vygotsky.

Subsequently, an action research trial was carried out in a small number of early childhood centres in three different geographic regions (Carr, May, & Podmore, with Cubey, Hatherly, & Macartney, 2000). The research team developed shorter forms of the child's questions, linked to each Strand of *Te Whāriki*, for practitioners to reflect on quality from a child's perspective. The simplified questions are:

- "Do you know me?" (Belonging),
- "Can I trust you?" (Well-being),
- "Do you let me fly?" (Exploration),
- "Do you hear me?" (Communication), and
- "Is this place fair for us?" (Contribution).

Practitioners chose a child's question, then trialled a related self-evaluation tool for gathering data. The Learning and Teaching Stories research is likely to result in the development of resources for practitioners. Carr et al. (2000) note that the intention is to empower practitioners to assess and self-evaluate reflectively, using the child's questions. The project has developed and extended the idea that evaluation of an early childhood programme should be underpinned by a child's perspective of quality.

Scope of this Review

This review of the international and New Zealand literature focuses mainly on two specific aspects of quality in early childhood education: staff qualifications, and indicators of quality.

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

There has been a long-held vision that in New Zealand early childhood education will be provided by well qualified staff. This has developed in part because of research evidence. Much of the research literature on quality experiences for children focuses on staff qualifications, regulations, and outcomes of early childhood education for children.

There is a wide recognition, by professionals and within the regulatory and advisory services provided by Government, that training and qualifications are key components of quality in early childhood services. This is reflected in both ECD and ERO publications (1996, 1998).

The Early Childhood Development Unit (1996), in its booklet for parents, specifies trained staff as one of the eleven quality indicators for early childhood education. The booklet notes that the indications of quality staff are "training, qualifications, experience, understanding of and attitude towards children" (p.14).

Wylie (1994) in her review of literature, *What research on early childhood education/care outcomes can, and can't tell policymakers*, stated that "funding or enforcement incentives to improve training levels and the proportion of trained staff in centres are desirable" (p. 28). She commented that there is value in the current diversity of services, but notes that the services need to be backed up by appropriate regulations, monitoring of qualifications, and enforcement.

The stress on training and qualifications borne out by research which has found strong correlations between levels of training and qualifications and teacher practice. International and New Zealand studies will be described next.

International Research

Ruopp et al., (1979), in a study now nearly 20 years old which was initiated by the US federal government, used a representative sample of 64 childcare centres in Atlanta, Detroit, and Seattle. Approximately 1,800 children and 200 caregivers were observed. There were interviews with parents and standardised testing of children. The study found group size and specialised caregiver training were important predictors of the quality of the children's experiences of centres. In programmes for infants and toddlers, a third element of quality was increased adult/child ratios. Staff training related to childcare was more important than the numbers of years of formal education alone. Caregivers with specialised childcare training were more likely to spend time in social interaction with children—praising, comforting, responding, questioning and instructing. Children whose caregivers had

specialised training were more cooperative, more persistent, less frequently uninvolved, and scored higher on standardised tests.

Berk (1985) gathered detailed narrative descriptions of the behaviour of 37 centre-based caregivers working with 3- 5-year-olds. The descriptions were coded according to the Prescott, Jones, and Kritchevsky Observational System. The staff also answered a questionnaire. Results indicate that staff with higher education and child-related preparation had more positive interactions with children such as a decrease in restriction and increase in encouragement, development of children's verbal skills, and the use of indirect forms of guidance. Berk notes the wide difference in qualifications, as set out in licensing, ranging from bachelor degrees with specialisation in child development, to a staff member's being 16 years of age with no formal academic work or training experience.

Phillips (1987) in the book *Quality in child care: what does research tell us?* gathered together studies that looked at quality in childcare. Kontos and Fiene (in Phillips, 1987) designed a study, in collaboration with the childcare licensing office in Pennsylvania, to pinpoint the most critical aspects of childcare quality as a means to target its monitoring efforts. The study addressed the distinction between regulatable and non-regulatable indicators of childcare quality. Four measurement scales of centre quality were administered for each of ten randomly selected centres and of one hundred randomly selected children. The study found that the characteristics of the centres that contributed substantially, but not significantly, to children's development were the following cluster of characteristics—director's experience, and average staff experience, proportion of four-year degrees (not necessarily in early childhood education), and group size. Where staff were well paid and provided with better working conditions, a better quality environment was provided for children. Various standardised tests were used to measure the children's intellectual development, sociability, and language development. Clearly, staff qualifications, to degree level, were important.

Clarke-Stewart analysed the results from all the studies in Phillips' book, *Quality in child care: what does research tell us?* (1987). Her comments about variables that are regulatable by policy are of particular relevance. She discusses caregiver experience, and caregiver education and training. With respect to caregiver experiences she considers the differences among the studies indicate that the relation between caregiver experience and child development is curvilinear with an optimal level, perhaps, falling between 10 and 15 years. The differences between the studies could also be attributable to differences in ideology and attitudes of the directors. Age of directors was not mentioned in two of the studies in the book. In examining the studies of caregiver education and training, Clarke-Stewart found two studies where

caregiver training in child development was significantly related to children's intellectual and language development. One study (Clarke-Stewart, 1987) found that children who had caregivers with higher levels of education (i.e., college graduates), rather than more formal training in child development, did better socially. Clarke-Stewart concludes (p. 118) that the best clues as to the indexes of quality childcare are found in a licensed programme (usually in a centre) in which:

- the child's interaction with the caregiver is frequent, verbal, and educational, rather than custodial and controlling;
- children are not left to spend their time in aimless play together;
- there is an adequate adult / child ratio and a reasonable group size;
- the caregiver has a balanced training in child development, some degree of professional experience in childcare, and has been in the programme for some time.

A summary in *Young Children* (1993) examines 6 research projects of the 1980s, on the impact of group size, child / staff ratios, and staff training on childcare quality. The studies indicated the importance of increased education and specific professional training for staff, as follows:

- Child-related training is linked to more social interaction between the caregiver and the children, more cooperation and task persistence among children, and less time that children are uninvolved in activities. (Ruopp, Travers, Glantz, & Coelen, 1979)
- Children score better on tests of cognitive and social competence when their caregivers have higher levels of child-related training and formal education (Clarke-Stewart & Gruber, 1984)
- Teacher preparation (both preservice and inservice) significantly predicts programme quality, and better programme quality is linked with more positive child outcomes, especially in terms of language and representational skills. (Epstein, in press)
- Overall education levels of caregivers also appear to positively affect outcomes for children. (Berk, 1985; Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989)
- Caregivers with more training have less authoritarian childrearing styles and slightly more knowledge about child development. Teachers with more training receive more positive ratings in observations and are less punitive and detached with children. (Arnett, 1989)
- Experience alone is not a predictor of effective caregiving (Howes, 1983; Kontos & Fiene, 1987) and has been linked to less cognitive and social stimulation of infants and more apathy among infants. (Ruopp, Travers, Glantz, & Coelen, 1979).

Teacher practice is also known to make a difference to the quality of early child-

hood settings and to child learning and development outcomes. The key is teacher responsiveness to children's learning interests according to Ellen Galinsky (1998).

In similar vein, Podmore and May, with Mara (1998) describe the key variables as teacher responsiveness, respectfulness, and reciprocity. The concept of "Responsive, Reciprocal, Respectful Relationships" developed during focus group consultations with representatives of early childhood practitioner groups, teacher educators, and other key informants. The five "child's questions" (already outlined), which emerged from the later phases of the project, challenge teachers to reflect on providing "responsive, respectful, reciprocal relationships in ensuring that the centre programme has positive outcomes for children" (Podmore & May, with Mara, 1998, p. 121).

Teacher practice variables most often tapped in recent studies in the US are Classroom Interactions, and Adult Involvement. The Classroom Interactions scale (Arnett, 1989) yields three scores: sensitivity, harshness, and detachment. These scores predict adult's involvement with children, and children's social competence scores and sense of security. The Adult Interaction scale (Howes & Stewart, 1987) encompasses: positive initiations, positive responses, language play, positive (behaviour) management, and negative management. There is a positive relationship between higher adult scores on the first four of these scales and better child outcomes (Howes, 1997).

Arnett (1989) studied 59 caregivers in 22 childcare centres on the island of Bermuda. He investigated in differences depending on levels of training, in caregivers' attitudes and their behaviour in interactions with children. His study asked how much training is necessary in order to improve the skills of child care workers to a notable degree. The four different levels of training were no training, two courses of the Bermuda College training programme, the entire four year course Bermuda College training programme and a four-year college degree in early childhood education. The study found that the first year saw a significant change, and that caregivers with half or all of the Bermuda College training were less authoritarian in their childrearing attitudes than caregivers with no training. Staff with a four year early childhood education degree were different from the other three groups. Their child rearing attitudes were less authoritarian and they were rated higher on positive interactions with children and lower on punitiveness and detachment. Arnett, in his conclusion, suggests that

regulations requiring even a modest level of training for caregivers in day-care centres could have important and salutary effects on their job performance and on the quality of day-care environments. (p. 551)

Bredekamp (1989) discusses the value of the National Association for the Education of Young Children's accreditation system for centres. This system is in addition to state and local licensing requirements. The assessors of the system have found a strong correlation between lack of staff qualifications and weaknesses in interactions and curriculum. Where staff are not trained or are minimally trained in early childhood education/child development, inappropriate interacting and/or curriculum are seen. Where staff are trained at other levels of education e.g., elementary (equivalent to primary teaching in New Zealand) negative interactions are not as likely to be seen but inappropriate curriculum expectations are more likely to be seen. NAEYC staff who assess the centres using the accreditation system conclude that the areas of staffing and staff qualifications are powerful predictors of the quality of interactions and curriculum provided for children although, by themselves, they are not quality.

Bredekamp suggests the best predictor of overall programme quality appears to be a director with a strong educational background in early childhood education/child development and at least one degree (bachelors or masters). NAEYC has in some cases recommended accreditation on the basis that the centre has to have a specifically named director (lead teacher) who is a well qualified early childhood professional. Bredekamp notes that 42 states do not specify professional qualifications in early childhood education for the director in their licensing requirements despite this being the "single most important predictor of programme quality" (p.16).

Fried and Whitebook (1989) described the different approaches taken in childcare centres in Toronto and Massachusetts to upgrade salaries of staff. Staff salaries have been found to be one of the factors that relate to quality childcare. At the time of their study, Ontario's licensing act, the Day Nurseries Act 1983, specified that "every age group of children must have at least one trained staff person [who] is defined as someone with a degree in early childhood education, and centres need at least one credentialed person in order to access purchase of service agreements which pay a percentage of the cost of childcare." The study does not describe the qualifications or state funding or regulation in Massachusetts.

Jorde-Bloom's (1989) study of 990 centre directors provides data on the background, training, and experience of directors in licensed childcare centres in Illinois, and on the association between director qualifications and various indices of programme quality. Eighty-nine experts in public policy or early childhood programme administration participated, and a random sample of 103 of these directors were chosen for further study. The study used a self-report survey instrument.

Jorde-Bloom divides director qualifications into five categories:

- age and other background qualifications
- years of formal education (regardless of subject matter or specialisation)
- specialised preparation relevant to young children
- specialised preparation in programme administration (e.g., financial management, staff management)
- experience working in a childcare setting.

The study found a highly significant association between director's level of education and overall programme quality. Specialised training in early childhood education programme administration also showed significant associations with overall programme quality.

In discussing the study, Jorde-Bloom notes that:

Because of the difficulty of finding qualified staff at current salaries, there has been a push from some in the field to lower or eliminate existing standards as they relate to personnel qualifications. Early childhood leaders counter by saying that reducing standards is a short term solution that would have unintended long-term consequences in deteriorated programme quality. (p. 56)

Who Cares? Child Care Teachers and Quality of Care in America is a study of the needs of adults who work in childcare by Whitebook, Howes, and Phillips (1991). It explored the effects of teachers and their working conditions on the calibre of centre-based care in the United States. Information was gathered through classroom observations, and child assessments and interviews with centre directors and teaching staff in 227 childcare centres in Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, Phoenix, and Seattle. Classroom observations and interviews with centre directors and staff provided data on centre characteristics, programme quality and staff qualifications, commitment, and competency. With respect to training, the study found that teaching staff provided more sensitive and appropriate caregiving if they had completed more years of formal education, received early childhood training at the college level, earned higher wages and better benefits, and worked in centres devoting a higher percentage of the operating budget to teaching personnel.

In 1993, Whitebook, Phillips, and Howes revisited the *Who Cares?* study as *Staffing Study Revisited* and found that the overall quality of centres remained "worrisome" as indicated by low wages, lack of health, and coverage and high turnover among childcare teaching staff. The study found that the average size of the teaching staff employed in the centres had increased since 1988 from 14.3 to 16.2, but that this was due to an increased average number of assistant teachers. As assistant teachers were significantly younger, less well educated and less adequately

trained than teachers, the authors concluded that this would have a detrimental impact on the quality of caregivers.

Phillips, Howes and Whitebook (1992) examined the effects of the stringency of state childcare regulations, voluntary compliance with proposed federal childcare standards and the profit/non profit status on the quality of children's childcare environments. Across five metropolitan areas, 229 childcare centres were assessed. Phillips et al. found that centres in states with more stringent childcare regulations tended to offer higher quality care than that offered by centres in states with relatively lax regulations. The pattern was most characteristic of those dimensions of quality—ratios and staff training—that are regulated by the states.

Snow, Teleki, and Reguero-de-Aviles (1996) gathered information through a telephone survey of childcare centre licensing administrators in each state in 1995, and then compared the information with information gathered in 1981. Three critical indicators of childcare quality were considered—child/staff ratios, group size, and caregiver educational regulations. The study found that childcare licensing regulations continue to vary widely on the three important indicators of childcare quality. They note that over the 15 years there was little change in the number of states requiring a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or a bachelor's degree as minimum educational standards for childcare teachers, and there have been notable gains in the number of states requiring in-service training. States seem to have concentrated on adding in-service training to requirements, rather than introducing more stringent educational standards.

A large-scale study in the U.S., *Cost, quality and child outcomes in child care centres* (Ed. Helburn, 1995) examined the relationship between cost, quality and development outcomes for children across a random sample of 100 childcare centres in each of four states. The data showed that the quality of childcare is primarily related to:

- higher staff to child ratios,
- staff education,
- teacher turnover,
- administrator's experience and their effectiveness in curriculum planning.

Teachers' wages, and their level of education and specific early childhood training, were the most important characteristics that discriminated among poor, mediocre, and good quality centres. The study found that states with more demanding licensing standards had fewer poor quality centres. Centres that complied with additional standards beyond those required for basic licensing (such as those required for funding or accreditation) provided higher quality services.

Clifford (1995), one of the co-authors of the *Cost, quality and child outcomes in child care centres* study, reported (at the New Zealand Early Childhood Convention in Auckland in 1995) that the predictors of quality were:

- ratios,
- higher levels of general education of staff, and
- administrator experience.

Teachers' general education (referring to degrees) and specialised training in early childhood, and the wages they received, differentiated between high, medium, and low quality programmes. The study also found that stronger regulations and standards for care made a difference. States with more stringent regulations had fewer poor quality centres. Clifford comments that this study documents the positive side of regulations and standard setting for the quality of early childhood education available to young children. Clifford notes that the results of this study are consistent with the findings of Smith's (1996b) New Zealand study of quality of childcare centres for infants in New Zealand.

Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, and Cryer, (1997) use the term the "iron triangle" for the three structural variables that impinge on childcare process quality:

- adult/child ratios,
- group size, and
- teacher education/training.

The Phillipsen et al. (1997) study examined relationships between the different structural features of childcare. It analysed data, from *Cost, quality and child outcomes in child care centres* by Helburn (Ed.) (1995), which had been gathered through observation using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Caregiver Interaction Scale, and the Teacher Involvement Scale. The results indicate that higher quality centres were found in the American states with the most stringent regulations, and that childcare regulations have an impact on the quality of early childhood education that children experience. The researchers conclude that more stringent regulations for teacher education and experience, and adult/child ratios, have a substantial impact on childcare process quality.

A key article by Howes (1997) analysed data from the *Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study*, and from the *Florida Child Care Quality Improvement Study*. The results show that teachers with the most advanced education were most effective. There was also a relationship between the most advanced teacher preparation and teacher sensitivity and responsiveness. Howes' paper demonstrates clearly that the lead teacher (in a context where there is one lead teacher for every group of 20 children) needs to have a coherent qualification. Teachers were categorised into five pre-determined

levels of levels of qualification (which crossed both formal education categories and early childhood education categories). Those with no tertiary qualification, with or without attendance at/completion of a variety of courses, made little impact on the quality of programmes. A 2-year tertiary qualification or a Child Development Associate (CDA)—both coherent qualifications—had reasonable effects, but a degree with CDA qualification was more strongly associated with effective adult-child interaction processes. In these States, most staff with degrees had also completed their specialist training for early childhood education (that is, their CDA). The Florida Child Care Quality Improvement study (Howes et al., 1995) found significant improvements in child development outcomes after Florida regulated for better ratios in infant and toddler centres. The largest increases in some child outcomes occurred when settings hired teachers with higher qualifications, along with the ratio change.

Further findings reported from the Florida Child Care Quality Improvement study show that increases to staff qualifications, and improvements to staff-child ratios, did not lead to decreases in the number of infants and young children accommodated by the centres, nor to significant increases in the costs to consumers between 1992 and 1996 (Howes, Galinsky, Shinn, Gulcur, Clements, Sibley, Abbott-Shim and McCarthy, 1998). Teachers who had completed the CDA showed greater warmth, sensitivity and responsiveness, and their classrooms were rated higher on quality than those of teachers who did not hold this qualification.

Teacher Qualifications and Teacher Turnover

The National Child Care Staffing study (Whitebook et al., 1991) reached two conclusions pertinent to this discussion. First, teachers tend to provide higher quality early childhood education to children in terms of "appropriate and sensitive caregiving" when they have more formal education, more early childhood training at the college level, and earn higher wages and benefits. Second, higher-quality centres have more highly educated and trained staff, better wages and work environment, and lower staff turnover.

The Centre for the Childcare Workforce (Whitebook et al.) released a 1998 replication of the 1988 childcare staffing study. Childcare centres in their sample in 5 cities in the USA report high levels of job turnover and serious difficulty in finding qualified teaching staff. Their highlights showed that, in 1988 and 1997, centers which paid better wages had a lower turnover of teaching staff. Centres that continued operating throughout the 9-year study paid higher wages, employed more college-educated staff, and reported lower staff turnover than centres that ceased operating. Pre-school classrooms in centres that stayed open were rated of higher quality (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1998).

A report evaluating the NAEYC Accreditation (Whitebook, Sakai, and Howes, 1997) found that

"Centers—whether accredited or not—that retained a greater % of highly-skilled teachers were significantly more likely to receive good or better ratings on overall classroom quality. . . Skilled teaching staff are more likely to remain at their jobs if they earn higher than average wages, work with a higher % of well-trained teaching staff, and work in a climate where other well-trained and educated teachers remain on the job." (Ibid; p.v.)

Influence of Lower Education and/or Qualifications Levels on Early Education

White (1993) carried out two separate observational case studies in sessional classrooms. The first study was conducted with three teachers of 4-year-olds attending a for-profit preschool. None of the teachers held a formal degree. The second study was conducted with two teachers of 4-year-olds attending a public school preschool. Both teachers were certified teachers but only one held a degree in early childhood education, and the other a degree in elementary education. Entry and exit interviews with the teachers were held and the researcher observed interactions in the classroom until she considered she was going to see no new types of interactions. In the second case study 32 visits were made over 16 weeks. Only one of the teachers offered developmentally appropriate activities, and she was the only one with a degree qualification specifically related to the age group. On the basis of this small-scale study White concludes that questions related to teacher education and licensing need to be addressed to ensure quality outcomes for children.

A structural analysis of Head Start Classroom quality (Abbott-Shim, Lambert, and McCarty, 1998) found that the educational level of teachers had a direct effect on inappropriate beliefs. These beliefs in turn impacted inappropriate instructional activities, which influenced the quality of the classroom environment. Teachers' educational level also impacted on their attitude to families. The authors theorise that teachers with a low level of formal education take a practical view of teaching. They use sets of activities and techniques rather than basing their work on reflection and theory—they focus more on what they can do, than why.

Judy Florian and colleagues from the High/Scope Educational Research Association (1998) studied a programme for children identified as being at risk for educational failure (N=21,077). They found that high quality programmes promoted children's development more than medium quality. Significantly correlated quality variables with child observation ratings included: funds are provided to employ staff with appropriate training and expertise, the Early Childhood Spe-

cialist (Supervisor/Head teacher) is affiliated to an early childhood professional organisation and has appropriate education and training.

Larry Schweinhart and other colleagues from the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation have been comparing 3 types of Head Start early childhood service (High/Scope, those in public schools, non-profit childcare centres) and the impact of professional development on their centre quality, using observational measures (1998). There were mostly teachers with a BA in High/Scope programmes whereas the majority of teachers in other types of early childhood service had lesser early childhood education training. In High/Scope services, the variable that had the greatest effect was their agency in-service training and its length. In the other early childhood service types, the positive relationship was with the extent of their teachers' education. (Moreover, the approaches to professional development in these other types of services—curriculum issues workshops, and observation and feedback—had negative effects on their programme quality). It would seem that positives go together, and what is needed as a foundation for quality early childhood education is advanced education for early childhood teachers. (These findings are similar to those of New Zealand researchers Gaffney and Smith, 1997, see later section).

A literature survey by Wangmann (1995) in Australia emphasises two types of components of quality in childcare: components that **contribute** to quality, and those that **determine** quality. The "determining components" of quality childcare programmes are four developmentally appropriate practices: sensitive, responsive staff-child interactions, implementation of appropriate curricula, high standards of health and safety, and demonstrated staff-parent co-operation (Wangmann, 1995, p. 73). Components that contribute to quality are those that provide favourable conditions in which good quality outcomes are most likely to occur. Wangmann specifies that regulations and staff training are both contributing components of programme quality in early childhood services. On the basis of evidence from the research literature, she reports that, if good quality programmes are to be delivered, relevant training in early childhood education and child development is the most significant contributing component (p. 77).

The Australian inquiry into early childhood education, *Childhood matters*, canvassed a wide range of early childhood issues including staffing (pp. 78–92) and regulation (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996, pp. 104–109). Currently qualifications are subject to State and Territory regulations. The report notes that

This acceptance of a much higher proportion of unqualified primary contact people in long day care continues, despite all the evidence about qualifications

being the single most important determinant of quality programs. Two factors contribute to this view. The first is related [to] the cost implications of increasing the number of qualified staff. The second concerns the attitude still prevalent that care, like parenting, does not require qualifications, nor is it a particularly worthwhile task. But as pointed out by Mr Cupit, Head of the de Lissa Institute of Early Childhood Education and Family Studies at the University of South Australia, "parenting does not give you appropriate models for the sort of care that you have to provide when you have lots of children, different children, multicultural children." (p. 81)

Similarly, Tayler (2000) points out that the ironic separation between "care" and "education in the Australian context remains linked to legislative requirements for staff qualifications. She reports that there is a tendency for unqualified staff to be more likely to receive exemptions from state qualification requirements if they work in localities where few qualified staff are available. Tayler also addresses the issue of attitudes towards teacher education and qualifications, asserting the need to move on from "a cultural vacuum built at a time when 'nice ladies looked after children'" (p. 265).

Research on Family Daycare/Home-Based Care

A few relevant North American studies on family daycare/home based care are available. For example, Muller and Orimoto (1995) used qualitative methods to evaluate two rural programmes designated to recruit, train and retain family day care providers. The researchers noted that retention was of interest, because the retention of family based carers is a challenge. Muller and Orimoto found that the programmes were useful in recruiting potential providers and training them. Graduates demonstrated reliable knowledge gain and were judged to provide a high quality family daycare by informal direct observations. They note that, with respect to family day care, regulation and/or licensing alone are insufficient to guarantee quality childcare and that for this reason many states provide some form of training and assistance to help home based carers meet accreditation requirements.

Pence and Goelman (1991) extended the work published in Phillips' book *Quality in child care: what does research tell us?* (1987). They used a similar methodology in Vancouver, Canada to that of the earlier study (1987) in Victoria, but concentrated on family day care. The sample included 46 family daycare providers. Assessment measures used were the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment scale, and the Family Day Care Rating Scale, and interviews with the family day care providers. Pence and Goelman note that licensing, family day care specific training, and a commitment to family day care as professional employment at

present and for a considerable period of time in the future do emerge as significant variables in relationship to quality of care. No personal variables show a statistically significant difference.

A study of children in family daycare and relative care in three American communities (Galinsky, Howes, Kontos, and Shim, 1994) provides information useful for considering home-based care. The researchers identified the characteristics of quality in these settings to be: child safety, provider-parent communication, and a warm and attentive relationship between the provider and child. The study found that providers who were sensitive and warm, were also likely to be responsive to children, and have better parallel quality ratings. In sum, the characteristics of quality go together. Providers were more likely to be rated as sensitive, observed as responsive, and rated as having higher global quality scores when, *inter alia*, they:

- "are committed to taking care of children and are doing so from a sense that this work is important and it is what they want to be doing",
- "seek out opportunities to learn about children's development and childcare, have higher levels of education, and participate in family childcare training",
- "are regulated" (p.3.)

"Intentional" providers offer higher quality, warmer, more attentive care which is associated with better growth and development in children.

The same publisher has produced a study focused on the impact of training caregivers in family day care (Galinsky, Howes and Kontos, 1995). Three communities were involved, and 130 providers compared with 112 not trained. Not only did global quality improve but child attachment was observably more secure after the training.

Culture-Specific Early Childhood Services

No overseas research is available on the equivalent of Te Kohanga Reo, Pacific Islands early childhood centres, and playcentre. The New Zealand research literature on quality early childhood services better reflects the diversity of New Zealand early childhood sector.

New Zealand Research

This section provides material from New Zealand of relevance to the topic of training and qualifications.

Smith (1996a) contends that economic factors are not the only obstacles to attracting and maintaining competent staff, and that society's devaluing work with young children contributes to the low status of workers and consequently to their

lower wages. However, Smith and other early childhood advocates consider that improving qualifications may be the best way of improving salaries and increasing professionalism in the field. In the first phase of the longitudinal project, *Competent Children at 5: Families and Early Education*, Wylie et al. (1996) described the competencies of 307 children in the context of their family background, home activities, the length of their early childhood education experience and the quality of their current early childhood experience as they approached five years of age.

The Competent Children project team also rated early childhood settings when the children were nearly 5 years old. They found that the items to do with adult:child interaction clustered into a factor. This factor, plus one other variable (staff allowing children to complete activities) had a significant effect on the development of several competencies. The factor encompassed:

- staff are responsive to children;
- staff model and encourage children by use of positive and explanatory guidance or discipline approaches;
- staff join children in play; and
- staff ask open-ended questions that encourage children to choose their own answer.

Quality staff:child interactions were still having an impact when children were aged 6. In addition, two process variables had an impact. They were: staff encouraged/extended exploration of materials, and staff encouraged elaborated discussions/conversations. These were found by observing the children. Wylie et al. found that quality of the early childhood education services was related to:

- whether the staff held an early childhood education qualification;
- the highest staff salary paid;
- the children to staff ratios;
- group size and;
- the early childhood service type.

Levels of staff qualifications were coded using four categories, (a) teaching diploma in early childhood education or higher diploma in early childhood education, (b) certificate equivalent to two years full time training, based on a training curriculum, (c) all other modules, training or qualifications which are neither of the above two broad categories, and (d) no early childhood qualifications.

The study found that 23 percent of staff had an early childhood diploma, 16 percent had a certificate or equivalent, 45 percent had other sorts of modules, and 13 percent had no qualifications. The researchers report that: "Quality ratings of centres increased with an increasing proportion of qualified staff, and higher salaries paid to staff" (Wylie et al., 1996, p. 110). In centres where the highest staff

qualification involved 2 or more years' training, qualifications were associated with programme quality and with children's self-esteem. When the analyses included all of the staff members/co-ordinating adults, not only the one with the highest qualification, more qualified staff was linked with total quality and with adult-child interactions.

Smith (1996b), in her study of the quality of childcare centres for infants in New Zealand, found that training, especially diploma level qualifications, was associated with better scores on the quality measures and there were strong negative relationships between quality measures and lack of school qualifications and also low wages. The study involved 200 under 2-year-olds in cities and provincial towns, and 200 staff and 100 supervisors. The measures of centre quality used were the Abbott-Shim Assessment Profile and the Melhuish/Howes observational schedule. The report concludes that working conditions, wages, and education of staff were of crucial importance in providing high quality environments for infants.

Gaffney and Smith (1997) evaluated eight early childhood contracts that provided professional development on *Te Whāriki* in 1995. Interviews and questionnaires were used to gather data from kindergarten, childcare, playcentre and other early childhood centres. The "previous training of course participants or lack of training" was identified as "critical". Staff with more understanding of child development and of early childhood curriculum make maximum use of professional development. The researchers comment that:

- "centres where staff are well trained and have low rate of staff turnover are likely to benefit most from professional development";
- "the provision of high quality professional development opportunities is equally or more likely to improve [practice] as external regulation and control, though both are necessary" (p.87)

Gould (1998) explored in depth the experiences of ten early childhood educators who attended a professional development programme offered by the Department of Early Childhood Care and Education Studies at the University of Waikato. The programme consisted of three two-day modules, one month apart. The teachers were interviewed one year later and common themes were analysed. One theme was that teachers who had completed a professional development programme felt their ability to introduce changes to their centre's programme was hindered by having unqualified staff members in the centre. Gould considers this findings significant because of the high levels of unqualified staff employed in early childhood centres. Gould concluded that the qualifications held by the people in a centre are an important element of the "people component" in a centre. Participants who worked with unqualified people in their centre often found it harder to implement

change. The programme facilitators thought that unqualified people often did not possess the basic level of understanding about early childhood issues that is often assumed in professional development programmes (p.133).

In New Zealand there is diversity in early childhood services (see list in *Education to be More*, p. 25). This diversity is reflected in the differing training of staff for each service and the preferred requirements for the different services. Kindergartens, playcentres (and Te Kohanga Reo, more recently) specify their own qualifications requirements, e.g., kindergartens require that staff hold the Diploma in Teaching (ECE).

In the *What counts as quality* series by the Education Review Office (ERO), concerning the various early childhood services, a number of themes emerge. The reports highlight key aspects of quality across all the services, and the existence of some very good centres. However, the reports also note that there exist centres that are of concern, as well as generalised concern about specific aspects of quality in relation to the different services. The ERO series do not specifically address qualifications, but do address implementing the curriculum, programme planning, management and administration practices, and practice and interactions with children. As the research reviewed suggests, these are linked, in turn, to the qualification levels of staff.

In an informal survey of "good quality" and "poorer quality" centres ERO (1998 personal communication) data show that "good quality" centres are more likely to have several staff holding a Diploma of Teaching (ECE) qualification. No kindergartens or playcentres in their small scale survey were listed as "poorer quality".

Future directions: Early childhood education in New Zealand, published by the New Zealand Educational Institute (1996), focuses on the structures and funding required to deliver high quality education services for young children. The report notes that the licensing points system does not guarantee that trainees learn the core components of the Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education) (p.28), and that there are examples from organisations which show limited understanding by the sector of the difference between licensing points and qualifications (p. 94).

Early childhood services for Maori and Pacific Islands children currently have specific training. These were highlighted at the NZCER early childhood seminar *What is government's role in early childhood education?*. Peggy Luke-Ngaheke (1993) commented on training for Kohanga Reo. She noted that when the Kaiako had other training in early childhood it was good, but that early childhood education training did not and does not equip the Kaiako to work in Kohanga Reo speaking in Maori thirty hours per week to the mokopuna.

At the same seminar Fereni Ete spoke about the A'oga Amata, Samoan early childhood centres and the A'oga Amata Training Centre in Wellington, which between 1987 and 1993 trained almost 300 Pacific Island women. Some then went on to further early childhood education training with the Wellington College of Education or Te Tari Puna Ora O Aotearoa / New Zealand Childcare Association.

Future directions: Early childhood education in New Zealand (1996) notes that unlicensed Pacific Islands early childhood groups are in a "catch 22" situation. The language groups can attract only limited funding, not higher levels of funding, because they are unlicensed (i.e. they are eligible for the ECD grant but not the Ministry of Education bulk funding). Qualified Pacific Island teachers are not paid a salary in unlicensed centres and so are drawn away to working in licensed services in the mainstream such as in childcare centres and kindergarten (p. 31).

Everiss (1999) notes that to date, no New Zealand studies have focused on the quality of early childhood provision in family daycare settings. Her survey of 391 caregivers in chartered home-based schemes provides information on caregivers' views on training and perceived training needs (Everiss, 1998). The majority (80%) of caregivers had received some training provided by their home-based schemes, some (11%) had New Zealand Qualifications Authority approved licensing points or a Diploma of Teaching (ECE) or its equivalent, but a "small number" (9%) had no qualifications. Caregivers in family daycare homes saw specialised training as necessary, and they expressed willingness to undertake further training provided that support and reward systems were in place. In view of the international research findings on quality provision, Everiss suggests that further training should lead to higher quality family daycare services.

The proposed framework emerging from Podmore and May's (1998) project uses the concept of Learning and Teaching Stories, which encourage teachers to reflect on their practices and centre programmes. Carr, May and Podmore (2000) found in their action research project that practitioners' prior knowledge and confidence with *Te Whāriki* were important influences on the processes of reflection and self-evaluation. Centres with highly trained staff "were demonstrating an ability to implement the framework with considerable understanding, insight, and excitement about what they were learning about children, and were then planning accordingly." (p. 48). Less confident staff required more guidance from the action research facilitators, but they too progressed towards planning decisions. These findings provide further support for the view that it is highly desirable for practitioners to hold a comprehensive qualification in early childhood education and to receive continuing professional development.

Summary

In summary, the overseas and New Zealand literature indicates that:

- regulating levels of qualifications of staff improves the quality of teaching practice in early childhood education settings;
- coherent qualifications are important to the processes of learning and teaching in early childhood centres and influence outcomes for children;
- there are benefits if the "lead teacher's" qualification in the USA is at least at Child Development Associate level and preferably with a degree (Howes, 1997), which indicates the need for Diploma of Teaching qualification levels in New Zealand;
- low education levels of teachers have a potentially harmful influence on teachers' beliefs and programming, and low quality programmes are potentially harmful for children;
- the effectiveness of professional development is influenced by staff qualifications, and the number of qualified staff in centres and services.

QUALITY EVALUATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Introduction

This section of the review summarises material related to the evaluation of early childhood service quality, as well as literature critiquing the methods and instruments used for such evaluation. It includes relevant information from New Zealand sources, as well as information on practices in Australia, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

There is a good deal of emphasis on accreditation material in this section. It is important to note, however, that the accreditation systems developed for use in Australia and the US focus on childcare programmes. In New Zealand there are diverse early childhood services, not only childcare centres (many of which operate according to particular philosophies, such as Montessori), but also kindergartens, playcentres, nga kohanga reo, Maori-medium centres, Pacific Island early childhood centres and language groups, and home-based services such as family day care programmes. Nevertheless, there are valuable lessons to be learned from the experiences of early childhood organisations in other countries as they designed, developed and trialed their own systems, instruments and indicators for evaluating quality in early childhood services.

Formative evaluation

The need for ongoing evaluation, modification and enhancement within early childhood programmes is recognised by early childhood educators such as Wangmann (1992a), who stresses that programme evaluation is a "continuous, dynamic process". Daniel (1995) also states that accreditation is not a static process: the associated criteria are continually being modified, based on research and practice. Abbott-Shim and Sibley (1997), in the introduction to their Assessment Profile, assert that "... the maintenance of high quality early childhood care and education requires continuous review and planning". Pascal et al. (1996) describe how their process of review and implementation ensures that any definitions of quality are not static or finite, allowing for variations influenced by time and place.

Programme evaluation and programme accreditation

Wangmann (1992a) makes a clear distinction between programme evaluation and programme accreditation:

Like accreditation, program evaluation monitors quality in the program, usually

as a result of self evaluation, using quantitative and objective indicators as measures of quality. The chief difference between program evaluation and program accreditation is that in the latter, recognition is given to those programs that substantially comply with the established criteria. Because of the public nature of the outcome, and the consequences following from that, there needs to be acceptance by the [early childhood sector] as a whole of the particular set of criteria selected for accreditation. (Wangmann, 1992a, p. 4)

Elsewhere, Wangmann (1992b, p.27) reports that, in Australia, both regulations and accreditation are necessary to build quality:

Accreditation builds on the base set by regulations, however it must be emphasised that while regulations are necessary they are not sufficient to ensure quality. Accreditation is necessary to bridge the gap between the minimal level of quality set by regulations and [the] level of quality that should be the right for all children.

Cubey and Dalli (1996) note that the terms "assessment" and "evaluation" often appear side by side, and sometimes interchangeably. However, they believe that it is important to differentiate between these terms:

Assessment is carried out for information on the outcomes of the specific actions or programmes, and evaluation provides information about their value. (Cubey and Dalli, 1996, p. 7)

Selecting a programme evaluation instrument

Wangmann (1992a) draws upon work by Abbott-Shim and Sibley (1990), and suggests that when selecting a programme evaluation measure, consideration must be given to the following factors:

1. *The range of the programme evaluation instrument.* (e.g., developers must ensure that it is neither too broad nor too narrow in focus; for example, the age range(s) to be covered must be given careful consideration).
2. *Validity/credibility.* Specifically, Wangmann cautions that criteria selected for evaluating early childhood programmes must be supported by research evidence, to have credibility amongst the early childhood sector.
3. *Reliability.*
4. *Specificity of criteria.* Criteria may be expressed as clearly defined discrete units (e.g., electrical outlets covered), or complex units (e.g., staff responsiveness). Typically there will be a combination of both, but the more clearly defined the criteria, the more objective the assessment procedures are likely to be.
5. *Scoring* (e.g., checklists and rating scales).
6. *Sources of information about the programme.* Information is commonly drawn from

written documentation, reports and/or interviews with staff, parents, (and occasionally the children themselves), and direct observation of the programme in action.

7. *Training for data collection.* Both internal and external training is likely to be needed: internal, so that centres can evaluate their own programmes and practices; and external, so that independent assessors can also carry out evaluations.
8. *Recording of information* collected and observed.

(Wangmann, 1992a)

Wangmann (ibid.) presents a chart comparing three of the more widely used programme evaluation models: the Abbott-Shim and Sibley Assessment Profile for Early Childhood Programmes,¹ Harms and Clifford's Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), and the Accreditation Criteria and Procedure of the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs (developed by NAEYC). Wangmann observes that, although all three address key components of quality in early childhood programmes, they do differ in content and methods of administration, and were developed for different reasons.

Most evaluation instruments allow for variation amongst internal components according to the age group served by the programme to be evaluated. The most common age differentiations are between infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Most of the instruments have been developed specifically for use with long-day childcare programmes, some (such as the Effective Early Learning Research Project in the U.K., Pascal et al., 1995) state that they are suitable for use in a wide range of early childhood settings.

In contrast, Head Start in the U.S.A. has developed its own systems of indicators and "Program Performance Measures", described as "a consensus-driven set of criteria for program accountability." (Tarullo, 2000, p. 2). Its data collection at the beginning and end of each school year provides "pre- and post-findings of change in children's growth and development, consistency of classroom quality, as well as information about family characteristics and families' accomplishments over the course of the year". (Ibid.)

Many instruments are not suitable for evaluating home-based services such as family day care. However, at least three instruments have been developed for this purpose: Harms and Clifford's Family Day Care Rating Scale (1989), the Child Care Partnership of Dallas' Family Day Care observation instrument (developed for use within a voluntary accreditation system for Family Day Care homes; and described in Wangmann, 1992a), and Quality Assist's Assessment Profile for Family

¹ This has been used, with some modifications, by New Zealand researchers. See Smith (1996).

Day Care (which is currently licensed to the National Association for Family Child Care and is used to assess family child care homes for accreditation).

The accreditation/evaluation cycle

There is a similar cycle for self-assessment and / or accreditation processes (although different terminology may be used):

1. A baseline evaluation and / or a period of self-reflection takes place. This is usually done by providing answers or ratings to a series of questions or criteria outlined in a written document.
2. The results are studied, and evaluative conclusions are formulated.
3. An action plan is developed. There may be help from external agencies with this process, and there is variation in terms of the amount of support available and the cost of this support.
4. The action plan is implemented.
5. Following an additional period of self-reflection / evaluation, programmes decide when/if they are ready to be assessed by an external, trained validator / reviewer.
6. If accreditation is the final goal, centres are then accredited or not. If not successful, they can appeal, or make the necessary changes and then re-apply.
7. Accreditation typically lapses within a pre-determined time period, or when there are significant staff changes (e.g., when a director ("person responsible") leaves; or following a period of high staff turnover).

Although staff are always involved in the self-study process, parent input is seen as more important to some systems than others. Only the Effective Early Learning (EEL) Professional Development / Research Project (Pascal et al., 1996) specifically outlined methods for including children's perspectives.

Pascal et al. (1996) describe their project as "a process of validated self evaluation which is used as a basis for programme development". The process is designed to be used in a range of early childhood settings. The EEL project is based on a theoretical position that quality is a "value laden, subjective and dynamic concept, which varies with time and place". There is recognition that early childhood settings are influenced by cultural norms and societal values. Adhering to fixed definitions of quality was seen to be inappropriate. Instead, the authors aim to capture the "essence of quality" as reflected in practice, and to explore how this quality is perceived and experienced by the individuals involved.

Pascal et al. report that their approach has adopted the "inclusionary model" of Moss and Pence (1994), meaning that the evaluation process is done *with* participants and not done *to* them. The research methodology suggests that working

through the whole process is likely to take between 9 and 12 months. There are four key stages: Evaluation Phase; Action Plan Phase; Development Phase; Reflection Phase. During the Evaluation Phase, staff, parents and children document and evaluate the quality of early learning within the setting. Findings are drawn together in a written report.

Sazer O'Donnell and Galinsky (1998) have written a guide for the development and use of benchmarks and indicators to measure progress and results in early childhood programmes and services, as a companion to a new brochure (*Indicators of Family and Child Wellbeing*, Governors Association, 1998).

Sazer O'Donnell and Galinsky report that throughout the US, states and communities are "measuring progress and results as an essential element of efforts to build and improve systems...and services for families with young children". They suggest that benchmarks and indicators are like road signs along an interstate highway: "They tell you how far you have come and help you see if you're on the road that will lead to your intended destination." However, the authors caution that, rather than being seen in isolation, benchmarks and indicators should be essential components of an entire process, which includes the establishment of vision and goals, the creation and implementation of action strategies, and the regular measurement of progress. The process must also allow for the revision of strategies, when required.

Schorr et al. (1995, in Sazer O'Donnell and Galinsky, 1998, p.8) describe potential disadvantages of "results- or outcomes-based accountability":

- Benchmarks and/or progress indicators could drive programmes and policies to emphasise only activities that can produce quick and measurable results, when some results may not show up for years.
- Effective programmes or systems may not seem to be accomplishing anything because their benefits are difficult to measure.

They warn that decision-makers should not replace regulations if or when quality improvement systems are put into place, nor cut basic funding as a penalty for only "good enough" quality. However, they also suggest that "...by informing and focusing the process, results-based budgeting does seem to support the development of a culture that is less rule-bound and more mission-driven". In other words, having money attached to results moves people on to focus on outcomes rather than just rules.

Researchers emphasise that it is important not to rush the process of developing a reliable programme evaluation measure. For example, Wangmann (1992a) describes this as a "lengthy and complex process", despite the fact that there is marked consensus regarding the key components of quality in childcare pro-

grammes. Sazer O'Donnell and Galinsky (1998) caution that "...developing indicators and benchmarks takes time and it is important to avoid shortcutting this process". It has been their experience that taking time for adequate consultation is critical to achieving widespread support for the goals of a (new) initiative. Additionally, Burdon (1991) stresses that time is needed to show participants the benefits of the process. Cubey and Dalli (1996) note that it may be some time before the New Zealand early childhood community feels comfortable with assessment and evaluation practices, which have not traditionally occurred within the early childhood sector. Hurst (1995) found self-reviews occurring within centres were described as largely informal, with only 21 percent of participating centres reporting that they used a formal self-review process. She concludes that:

... for quality monitoring processes to actually bring about improvement in New Zealand early childhood centres, it is important for external review criteria to be broadened and for centres to be provided with incentives for self review and helped to develop self review procedures. (p. v)

The approach suggested in *The Quality Journey* (Ministry of Education, 1999) of self-evaluations, possibly involving professional development advisers, conforms with the advice in the literature.

A strong message also recurs in the literature regarding the need to allow adequate time for participants to move through the self-assessment process "at their own pace" (e.g., Daniel, 1995; Burdon, 1991). Pascal et al. (1996) describe a process of "gradual, incremental change and development", rather than "revolution".

Research evaluations of the QIAS and NAEYC accreditation systems

Whitebook, Sakai, and Howes (1997) noted that within the US, only about 5 percent of centres were accredited by NAEYC, but many more were engaged in self-study.

Their research examined the effectiveness of NAEYC accreditation in improving the quality of centre-based care and in maximising the retention of educated and trained teaching staff. It was the first large-scale study of NAEYC accreditation to track changes in quality in centres seeking accreditation and to examine differences between centres that achieve accreditation and those that do not. Their results showed considerable variability around the country, which was attributed to the fact that the moderators are volunteers and untrained.

The key findings were that centres achieving accreditation demonstrated higher overall classroom quality at the time of embarking on the self-study process and greater improvements in overall quality ratings, ratios, and teacher sensitivity than

centres that participated in self-study but did not advance to the validation phase. Centres not advancing to validation demonstrated no improvement in these measures. Despite improvements, nearly 40 percent of accredited centres were rated as mediocre in quality. The authors conclude that accreditation falls short as a consistent standard of excellence. However, non-profit status, higher wages paid to staff, and the retention of skilled teachers, *in combination with accreditation*, are predictors of high quality in childcare centres.

The research evaluation team's findings (linked with related research) suggest that:

Accreditation provides assurance that a centre has successfully improved the quality of services that it offers to children and families, and that it is likely to exceed the quality of care provided by non-accredited centres. But until the validation process becomes more rigorous, accreditation status will not necessarily guarantee high quality care. This is particularly true in light of issues of staff stability. (Whitebook, Sakai & Howes, 1997, p. 47)

The authors point out that wages paid to staff play a critical role in determining the stability and qualifications of the workforce. To ensure that accredited centres reach and sustain a high level of care, they recommend that attention be directed at staff compensation and stability as criteria for accreditation. They also recommend that guidelines for accreditation readiness be developed, to help centres assess whether they are likely to succeed in gaining accreditation.

Daniel (1995) reflects on a decade of NAEYC accreditation. She argues that it is critical that the process begin with voluntary self-study, which provides a non-threatening opportunity for proactive involvement, and professional development. Regardless of the accreditation outcome, it also allows for the documentation of effective aspects of practice and for adjustments where necessary. Daniel sees particular benefits in the resulting individual and collective "ownership" of quality improvements. She notes that the NAEYC implemented the accreditation process in a manner that responds appropriately to cultural differences among children. She also cautions that accreditation cannot replace licensing regulations.

Bredenkamp and Glowacki (1996) cite the results of the *Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study* (Helburn, 1995) and conclude that US voluntary-participation "accredited programs are better quality than most programs but not that much better" (p.44). This could have much to do with the low take-up rate and who chooses to participate in a process where there are costs but no direct financial returns.

Burdon (1991) describes the process of trialing the Australian Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) in eight Adelaide centres. The trial provided useful information about the strengths and weaknesses of the self-study criteria.

113

As previously discussed, it also showed that it is essential to allow considerable time for all stages of the process, from the initial explanations to interested centres, through to the self-study phase.

Coopers and Lybrand (1995) were commissioned by the Australian Federal Government to study the quality, costs, training, strengths and difficulties of QIAS only 18 months into its implementation. Their methodology consisted of asking centres to complete a form indicating how well they met the QIAS principles; no external verification of the responses was conducted. The areas reported to have improved included:

- parental input and knowledge about the centre;
- identification of areas of improvement;
- awareness of appropriate practice;
- management and communication;
- team ownership of work practices.

However, Murray's (1996) critique of the Coopers and Lybrand report identified flaws including the timing of the survey (too soon after accreditation began), the low response rate and the bias that entailed, and the lack of verification of centres' self ratings.

Overall, it appears that voluntarily adopted evaluation and accreditation processes may lead to some improvements. However, they may not necessarily be associated with very high quality.

SYNTHESIS AND SUMMARY

Recent research documented in this review affirms the importance of qualifications for high quality early childhood services and for children's learning and development. The contribution of evaluation and accreditation systems is also evident, but weaker.

Findings overseas and in New Zealand indicate that regulating levels of qualifications of staff, and having staff who hold coherent qualifications, enhances the quality of early childhood teaching practice. There is also evidence in the New Zealand and overseas research literature that the effectiveness of professional development is influenced by staff qualifications and by the number of qualified staff in the early childhood centre or service. Conversely, low education levels of teachers negatively influence teachers' beliefs and their programming for children.

Teaching practice and responsive interactions within early childhood settings in turn influence outcomes for children. An emerging theme in this review, linked to qualifications and continuing professional development, relates to the role of reflective early childhood practitioners who are attuned to children's perspectives. This is evident, for example, in the Learning and Teaching Stories approach to assessment and self-evaluation (Carr, May, & Podmore, 2000). To some extent, a parallel international trend is found in work on quality. Dahlberg advocates the importance of a "pedagogy of listening" to quality provision in early childhood centres (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Dahlberg, 2000).

The current situation regarding qualification requirements in New Zealand is summarised in Appendix A. Work towards co-ordinating recent initiatives on practitioner self-evaluation is also outlined diagrammatically in Appendix B. In New Zealand, changes to qualification requirements are currently being implemented, and there are additional policy initiatives related to quality practice, for example, the inclusion by professional development providers of *The Quality Journey* in their work with services.

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APPENDIX A

CURRENT REQUIREMENTS AND POLICY CONTEXT

Qualification Requirements in the Regulations

The Education Act 1989 requires that all early childhood centres be licensed by the Secretary for Education unless they are exempt from licensing. The minimum standards which must be met in order for an early childhood centre to be licensed are included in the Education (Early Childhood Education) Regulations 1998. (Note that, in addition, there are licensed exempt groups i.e. playgroups and Pacific Islands language groups).

These minimum standards relate to an early childhood centre's premises, facilities, personnel, curriculum and management practices. They establish the maximum number of children who may be in attendance at any one time and require minimum staffing numbers. Qualifications are specified in the *Gazette*.

Home-based care

In the Education (Home-Based) Care Order 1998 the qualification requirement is specified as follows:

Each co-ordinator must hold a qualification approved by the Secretary for the purpose: (clause 5(45))

The Ministry of Education requires the home-based care co-ordinator to hold a minimum of 100 licensing points (not a specific qualification) as assessed by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. This specific requirement came into effect on 1 January 1995.

The Home-based Care Order states that the requirements for the caregiver (i.e., person who provides home-based care) is:

Every caregiver must be 20 or older (clause 5(48)).

Thus this code of practice does not specify any qualifications that caregivers must have. Programmes of activities are specified in clause 5(32), and management practices for child behaviour specified in clause 5(33)–(34).

Early Childhood Centres

The Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 1998 provide for qualifications as follows:

R.38. Secretary may recognise certain qualifications

- (1) For the purposes of these regulations, the Secretary may, by notice in the *Gazette*, recognise qualifications in respect of the education and care of children attending centres.
- (2) Qualifications may be recognised in respect of the education and care of children attending centres of all kinds, or in respect of the education and care of children attending centres of a specified kind only.

R.39. Persons responsible to hold recognised qualifications — No person may be, and the licensee of a licensed centre must ensure that no person carries out the duties of, a person responsible in respect of a licensed centre, unless the person has qualifications recognised under regulation 38 (being qualifications recognised in respect of the education and care of children attending centres of all kinds, or in respect of the education and care of children attending centres of a kind to which the centre belongs), and experience considered by the licensee to be suitable for carrying out the duties of a person responsible.

Requirements Promulgated by the Secretary

Relevant to the regulations (above), the Secretary for Education specifies requirements for the "person responsible" in respect of a licensed early childhood centre, and also home-based care coordinators. From 1 January 1995 the requirement was that the person responsible must hold a minimum of 100 licensing points (which was not a specific qualification) based on points for courses assessed by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

Points were for the Ministry of Education's licensing purposes only. An individual should graduate with a recognised qualification, or have been assessed to have equivalence by the NZQA, to have their qualification recognised in other industries or countries.

Current Situation

On 15 July 1999, the Ministry of Education notified early childhood education training providers about an announcement of Government decisions on early childhood qualifications. The announcement reaffirms that the Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 1998 and the Education (Home Based Care) Order 1992 require persons responsible and co-ordinators to hold a qualification recognised by

the Secretary of Education by notice in the *New Zealand Gazette*. An attached article for the *Education Gazette* specified that:

From 1 January 2002, coordinators and persons responsible will require a diploma or degree in early childhood teaching and two years experience in an early childhood education setting. However, anyone holding 100 licensing points on 31 December 2001 will be permanently eligible to be employed as a person responsible in any early childhood centre or as a coordinator of a home-based care network.

...Playcentres and kohanga reo have different qualification requirements to recognise their special nature while ensuring the Government's quality requirements are met.

In October 1999, further information published by the Ministry of Education in *Pitopito Korero* confirmed that "from 1 January 2002, persons responsible and coordinators in early childhood services must have had at least two years experience in an early childhood education setting, prior to their first appointment to one of these key positions." Issues for further consultation included the precise definition of "experience" and "two years", and matters of portability and enforcement (Ministry of Education, October 1999, p. 2).

The Secretary for Education currently recognises: Diploma of Teaching (ECE), Bachelor of Education (Teaching) (ECE), National Diploma of Teaching (ECE), or 100 licensing points earned prior to 1 January 2001.

The Minister of Education announced at the NZEI Te Riu Roa Early Childhood Millennium Conference on 11 July 2000 that:

In the long run what we want to see is a benchmark qualification for all early childhood teachers. But we know that this will be quite a slow process so for a start we will require all early childhood teachers who hold a position of responsibility to hold at least a Diploma of Teaching (ECE). We have chosen the diploma because it is a coherent course. The points system does not guarantee that a holder of 100 points has covered the whole gamut of learning necessary for a high quality qualification. People who have licensing points will have to upgrade to a Diploma of Teaching (ECE).

(Hon. T. Mallard, 11 July 2000, p. 2).

Policy Context

Quality Funding Policy

Since 1 March 1996, early childhood services have had the choice of remaining on the basic Ministry of Education funding rate or moving to a higher rate by meeting the Ministry's "quality" criteria. These criteria relate specifically to staff-child ratios and qualifications.

The Ministry of Education has different options based on staff-child ratios and qualifications criteria for the two main types of early childhood services, that is; home-based, and centre-based.

- **home based services** have a choice of meeting one of two different options based on the staff-child ratio and qualification criteria; and
- **early childhood centres** (i.e., childcare centres, kindergartens, Pacific Islands early childhood centres, playcentres, and kohanga reo) have a choice of meeting one of the two different options based on the staff-child ratio and qualifications criteria.

Programmes and Curriculum Policies

The Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPs) sets out mandatory requirements for all chartered centres towards improved standards beyond the minimum regulatory requirement. Revised DOPs come into force in 1998 and *Quality in Action*, a resource developed to support centres interpret the DOPs and meet these standards, was released on 30 June 1998 (Ministry of Education, 1998).

The national early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* was released in final form in 1996 (Ministry of Education, 1996). This has continued to receive widespread support from early childhood teachers and from other countries. *Te Whāriki* however, is a complex document, which places high expectations on teachers and adults in regards to understanding individual children's learning and development and to be able to support and scaffold this learning with an appropriate curriculum and programme. Joy Cullen has expressed concerns that poorly trained practitioners will lack the skills and understanding needed to implement *Te Whāriki* (Cullen, 1996). Staff working with professional development contracts have also expressed and experienced these concerns. Diploma and degree course training providers have in most cases adjusted their programmes and courses to support the implementation of *Te Whāriki* in centres.

Resource

The Quality Journey/He Haerenga Whai Hua—Implementing a Quality System in New Zealand Early Childhood Services

The Government agreed in the 1999 budget to the provision of a resource developed to support services implementing quality systems. Dr Anne Meade and Anne Kerslake Hendricks, in consultation with the early childhood sector, developed *The Quality Journey/He Haerenga Whai Hua*. This resource is designed to guide services that are developing quality improvement systems, undertaking reviews,

and using quality indicators. It builds on concepts and ideas in: the revised statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPs), *Quality in Action*, and *Te Whāriki*. Uptake of *The Quality Journey/He Haerenga Whai Hua* is voluntary (Ministry of Education, *Pitopito Korero* October, 1999). Professional development providers were contracted during 2000 to support services developing quality improvement systems.

For an outline of the links between the *The Quality Journey* resource development project (by Anne Meade & Anne Kerslake Hendricks), and the Learning and Teaching Stories approach to assessment and self-evaluation (by Margaret Carr, Helen May, and Val Podmore), see Appendix B.

APPENDIX B

LINKS BETWEEN EVALUATION PROJECTS

(Carr, May, Meade, and Podmore, September 1999)

MOE Research Project Learning and Teaching Stories (Carr, May, and Podmore, 1999)	MOE Resources for Quality Journey (Meade and Kerslake-Hendricks, 1999)		
5 Strands of Te Whāriki	Guiding Principles of DOPs		
• Belonging • Wellbeing • Exploration • Communication • Contribution PROCESS: Action research self-evaluation tools based on the following framework of "children's questions" <table border="0"> <tr> <td> • Do you know me? • Do you trust me? • Do you let me fly? • Do you hear me? • Is this place fair? </td><td> Action plans will include changes in any or all three areas </td></tr> </table>	• Do you know me? • Do you trust me? • Do you let me fly? • Do you hear me? • Is this place fair?	Action plans will include changes in any or all three areas	• Management and educators ... in partnership with parents/guardians and whanau will promote and extend the learning and development of each child. ... through the provision of quality early childhood care and education. • Educators will develop and implement curriculum which assists all children to grow up competent and confident learners [exploration] and communicators [communication], healthy in mind, body, and spirit [well-being], secure in their sense of belonging in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society. PROCESS: Quality review tools based on the following framework linked to the divisions of DOPs • Teaching learning and development • Adult communication and collaboration • Organisational management
• Do you know me? • Do you trust me? • Do you let me fly? • Do you hear me? • Is this place fair?	Action plans will include changes in any or all three areas		
5 Strands of Te Whāriki	Guiding Principles of DOPs		

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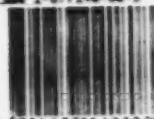
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56

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